

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants: M.D. Vrbnac et al. Attorney Docket No.: WEYE122621/24380L

Title: DRIED SINGULATED CELLULOSE PULP FIBERS

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Seattle, Washington 98101

March 29, 2004

TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS:

This application is a divisional of prior Application No. 10/140,973 and No. 09/998,143. This application is the same as prior Application No. 10/140,651, now abandoned. In the latter application, the claims were rejected over Westland et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,184,271), Graef et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,537,418), Wu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,074,524), and Naieni (U.S. Patent No. 5,873,979). Three of these patents disclose cross-linked fibers having low knot contents while a fourth, Wu et al., discloses clay-coated fibers. None of these patents, however, discloses a jet dried fiber.

As pointed out in the specification, a jet dried fiber has a high curl similar to cross-linked fibers. It is therefore admitted that the fiber claimed by applicants herein has a similar curl factor to that disclosed by the patents disclosing cross-linked fibers. However, applicants' claimed fiber herein is not cross-linked. Therefore, applicants' fiber provides a fiber having characteristics of cross-linked fibers without the inherent effort or expense concomitant with producing cross-linked fibers--that is, wetting a dried pulp sheet with cross-linking agents, fiberizing that sheet and thereafter drying and curing the cross-linking agent. Applicants' fiber, to the contrary, uses never-dried pulp that is jet dried to produce a curled fiber without a cross-linking agent. The curl is a direct result of the jet drying process.

Applicants' fiber is also distinguishable from that disclosed in Wu et al. in that the Wu et al. fiber is not jet dried and therefore does not exhibit the high curl inherent in applicants' jet

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dried fibers. Thus, it is clear that applicants' pulp is physically distinguishable from the cited references.

The Examiner is requested to note that applicants' claims are limited to fibers that are not cross-linked and fibers that are treated with a treatment substance selected from the group consisting of surfactants and mineral particulates. Treatment of the jet dried fiber in this way greatly decreases the knots in the final product when compared to an untreated product. Thus, applicants' treated fibers are clearly distinguishable from an untreated jet dried fiber. See Example 5 where treatment with fly ash results in a reduction of sonic knots from 14 to 20 down to 1.07-1.27. This reduction is greater than an order of magnitude. This reduction is clearly not suggested by the prior art, nor would it be expected by one of ordinary skill.

It is thus believed that applicants' invention clearly defines over the prior art previously cited by the Examiner or any of the other prior art cited in the parent applications, or for that matter any other art known to applicants herein.

The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to examine the application, and to promptly allow the case and pass it to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee E. Johnson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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